

Return to Use Initiative

2006 Demonstration Project

Beulah Landfill: Pensacola, Florida

THE SITE: The 101-acre Beulah Landfill was a waste disposal site from 1966 until 1984. Solid wastes, domestic septage, and wastewater treatment sludges were disposed of in a former sand borrow pit on the southern portion of the site; the northern portion of the site received only solid wastes. The State of Florida ordered a halt to operations at the waste pits in 1984. The site was listed on the National Priorities List (NPL) in 1990 and EPA issued a Record of Decision in 1993. The selected remedy included implementing institutional controls to limit future development at the site, taking steps to prevent trespassers from accessing the site, and completing a landfill closure according to Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) standards (these included capping the landfill area). Aside from implementing these institutional controls and monitoring the ground water, no further action was deemed necessary to ensure the protection of human health and the environment. The site was deleted from the NPL in 1998. Ground water monitoring continues on the site.

THE OPPORTUNITY: Although cleanup of the property finished in 1993, the site remained vacant and unutilized. A local Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) representative tried to contact EPA and FDEP on several occasions to inquire about using the site for aeromodeling, but he found it difficult to establish appropriate connections. Meanwhile, Escambia County (the site's owner) was working to develop low-impact reuse strategies that would not threaten the long-term integrity of the landfill cover, particularly on the southern half, where an engineered landfill cap is present. The County's objectives were based on its desire to improve open-space recreational opportunities for its citizens; in doing so, they could also make use of property that was otherwise unavailable.

THE BARRIER: Despite the documented protectiveness of the remedy, signs on the site's perimeter fence warned trespassers not to enter the site or disturb the soil. Such signs gave the impression that accessing or using the site was dangerous. Communication barriers also existed among FDEP, EPA, AMA, and Escambia County. AMA was at first unable to identify the appropriate party to contact about using the site. EPA, FDEP, and Escambia County had never considered an aeromodeling use for the site but were willing to look into the feasibility of the proposal.

THE SOLUTION: Ultimately, persistence paid off. Once the right people



Barriers:

Overprotective signs and fencing; uncertainty about whether aeromodeling was an appropriate site use

Solution:

Gate key given to authorized site users; active dialogue among EPA, state agency, county officials, and local aeromodeling club



Before:

Cleaned up, vacant landfill site with ongoing ground water monitoring

After:

Model airplane flying field, used daily by aeromodelers

at EPA, FDEP, and Escambia County became aware of the AMA club's interest and determined that aeromodeling was a suitable use, the AMA club began to move forward with site planning. AMA members had established a good reputation in the community by conducting model airplane flying lessons for middle school students, high school students, Boy Scouts, and organizations such as Toys for Tots. The club also visited neighborhoods near the site, distributed brochures, and spoke with residents to reassure them that aeromodeling would not cause noise pollution or other disturbances. The stakeholders formed a solid partnership and reached a consensus on the implementation of AMA's proposal for aeromodeling reuse.

THE SITE NOW: The northern part of the Beulah Landfill, now known as Fritz Field, is a successful model airplane park that has received high praise from local news media. Warning signs on the site fence were removed, but the fence remains in place to keep out trespassers. The AMA club has a key to the gated entrance; the sign on the gate reads, "Park is AVAILABLE when gates are OPEN." Any money generated from the use of the site cannot be used for individual profit, but rather must be invested in site improvements and maintenance. AMA members have devoted time, energy, and money to improvements and maintenance on the site to make it more compatible with modeling use, including laying down sod, mowing the grass, installing trash cans, and installing fencing at the parking lot. Escambia County also funded a runway for plane take-off and landing (pictured below). Local astronomers have recently expressed interest in establishing an observatory at the site and an on-site drainage pond may soon be used to operate model boats. The park is currently open seven days a week, from 7:30 A.M. until dusk.

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